JUDAH HALEVI (before 1075–after 1141) was born in Muslim Tudela, on the borders of Christian Spain. At an early age he travelled to the centres of Jewish scholarship in Andalusia. In Granada, he formed a lasting friendship with Moses ibn Ezra which is recorded in a moving exchange of poems. Later, Halevi settled in Toledo, the capital of Castile under Alfonso VI, where he practised medicine, apparently in the service of the king. However, the murder in 1108 of his benefactor, Solomon ibn Ferrizuel, at the hands of Christian mercenaries, and the attacks upon the Jews in Toledo in the following year, prompted him to return to the Muslim area, where he made his home in Cordoba. His personal experiences in Christian and Muslim Spain during the Reconquest ('Between the armies of Seir and Kedar my army is lost . . . when they fight their wars, we fall in their downfall'), and his philosophical views concerning the meaning of diaspora and the path to redemption, culminated in his decision to emigrate to the Holy Land. Shortly before his departure he completed his influential treatise *The Book of Argument and Proof in Defence of the*

Despised Faith. Translated from Arabic into Hebrew in the twelfth century, it came to be known as *The Book of the Kuzari* because it is composed as a dialogue between a Jewish scholar (the *ḥaver*) and the king of the Khazars, who had converted to Judaism in the eighth century. In September 1140, after an arduous voyage, Halevi arrived in Alexandria and was received with great acclaim. He died six months later, after a period of intensive creativity. His poetic corpus of secular and sacred works consists of over a thousand compositions which attest to an unrivalled mastery of language and musical patterns and a profound lyrical expression of religious and national themes. His 'songs of Zion' are, perhaps, his most famous works. No Hebrew poet since the Psalmists had sung the praises of the Holy Land with such passion. The longing for Zion, the pain of parting from his cultural environment, the perilous sea voyage – all these topics were uncommon in the poetry of the time.

'Even since You were' מֵאָז מְעוֹן הָאַהֲבָה 333

This is the most extreme expression in Halevi's poetry of his view that the suffering of Israel is a sanctification of the name of God. In the *Kuzari* the *ḥaver* maintains that Israel could have hastened the deliverance by submitting willingly to the yoke of exile.

'My love, have you forgotten' יְדִידִי, הֲשָׁכַחְתָּ חֲנוֹתְךָ 334

'O sleeper, whose heart' יָשֵׁן – וְלִבּוֹ עֵר 334

The opening line of this *reshut* refers to Song of Songs 5.2 which was allegorically interpreted to mean that Israel 'slept' in the darkness of exile but its heart yearned to rejoin the Shekinah. The 'star' (line 3; Numbers 24.17) represents the Messiah. Various messianic movements were active in Halevi's time and he once dreamt that the redemption would come in 1130.

'The lovely doe' יַעֲלַת חֵן, מִמְּעוֹנָהּ 335

An *ahava* which, like the previous poem, employs the phraseology of the Song of Songs. The 'lover' and 'gazelle' represent God.

'O you that sleep' יְשֵׁנָה בְּחֵיק יַלְדוּת 335

A *reshut* for *Nishmat*.

'Lord, all my longing' אֲדֹנָי, נֶגְדְּךָ כָּל תַּאֲוָתִי 336

A metrical *bakasha* ('supplication'), a type of personal *seliḥa* introduced by early Spanish *piyut*. Characteristically, its ending repeats its beginning.

'I am running towards' לִקְרַאת מְקוֹר חַיֵּי אֱמֶת 337

Takes, as its point of departure, Psalms 36.10: 'With You is the fountain of life; by Your light do we see light.'

An *ofan* in the rhyme-form of a *muwashshah*, but written in the special syllabic metre which was exclusively used in Spain in strophic *piyutim*. In this case, there are twelve syllables to a line, divided into units of six and six by internal rhymes. It is based on Solomon's prayer (2 Chronicles 6.18), on a verse from the daily *Kedusha* ('Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place'), and on the Midrashic paradox: 'The Lord is the place of His world, but the world is not His place'; that is, the world is contained in Him, not He in the world.

An epitaph for the tombstone of an unidentified 'Rabbi Abraham'.

This lament, in the *muwashshah* form, for the Ninth of Av elaborates on a Talmudic legend concerning the murder of the prophet Zechariah, who was stoned in the Temple-court by order of King Joash (2 Chronicles 24.21–22).

Vulgar Arabic – and sometimes Romance – was generally employed in the final couplet (*kharja*) of the secular Hebrew *muwashshah*. The *kharja* was, in most cases, borrowed from popular Arabic or Romance songs.

The Arabic superscription in the *diwan* reads: 'An improvisation composed upon passing by a river where washerwomen were laundering.'

Excerpts.

Another *muwashshah*, in a characteristic popular vein.

Opening section of the reply to a song of friendship (by Solomon ibn al-Muallim) which had greeted Halevi's move to Granada.

Zion was 'in the domain of Edom' (line 4) after the conquest of Jerusalem by the Crusaders in 1099.

Excerpts from the most famous of Halevi's Zion poems. Though not intended for the liturgy, it was soon included in the laments for the Ninth of Av and gave rise to scores of imitations ('Zionides'), many of which entered the Ashkenazi rite. The sixteenth-century legend, that Halevi was trampled to death by an Arab horseman as he was reciting this poem at the gates of Jerusalem, is widely known from Heine's portrayal in *Hebrew Melodies* (1851). The gates of Zion 'face the gates of heaven' (line 12) because, according to rabbinic belief, there was a celestial Temple corresponding to, and exactly opposite, the earthly one.

From a poem in which he exhorts himself to set forth on the voyage to Zion. The description of the storm at sea partly echoes Psalm 107.23-32.

The western wind brings him closer to his destination. This, and the following poems, were written during the long sea journey.

יְהוּדָה הַלֵּוִי

Judah Halevi

מֵאָז מְעוֹן הָאַהֲבָה

THE HOME OF LOVE

מֵאָז מְעוֹן הָאַהֲבָה הָיִיתָ –
חָנוּ אֲהָבַי בַּאֲשֶׁר חָנִיתָ.
תּוֹכְחוֹת מְרִיבַי עָרְבוּ לִי עַל שִׁמְךָ;
עָזְבֵם – יְעַנּוּ אֶת אֲשֶׁר עִנִּיתָ.
לָמְדוּ חֲרוֹנְךָ אוֹיְבַי – וָאֹהֲבֵם,
כִּי רָדְפוּ חָלָל אֲשֶׁר הִכִּיתָ.

Ever since You were the home of love for me, my love has lived where You have lived. Because of You, I have delighted in the wrath of my enemies; let them be, let them torment the one whom You tormented. It was from You that they learned their wrath, and I love them, for they hound the wounded one whom You struck down. Ever

מִיּוֹם בְּזִיתַנִי בְּזִיתִינִי אֲנִי,
כִּי לֹא אֲכַבֵּד אֶת אֲשֶׁר בָּזִיתָ.
עַד יַעֲבָר־זַעַם, וְתִשְׁלַח עוֹד פְּדוּת
אֶל נַחֲלָתְךָ זֹאת אֲשֶׁר פָּדִיתָ.

since You despised me, I have despised myself, for I will not honour what You despise. So be it, until Your anger has passed, and again You will redeem Your own possession, which You once redeemed.[1]

יְדִידִי, הֲשָׁכַחְתָּ

ZION COMPLAINS TO GOD

יְדִידִי, הֲשָׁכַחְתָּ חֲנוֹתְךָ בְּבֵין שָׁדַי –
וְלָמָּה מְכַרְתַּנִי צְמִיתוּת לְמַעֲבִידַי?
הֲלֹא אָז בְּאֶרֶץ לֹא זְרוּעָה רְדַפְתִּיךָ?
וְשֵׂעִיר וְהַר פָּארָן וְסִינַי וְסִין עֵדַי!
וְהָיוּ לְךָ דוֹדַי, וְהָיָה רְצוֹנְךָ בִּי –
וְאֵיךְ תְּחַלֵּק עַתָּה כְּבוֹדִי לְבִלְעָדַי?
דְּחוּיָה אֱלֵי שֵׂעִיר, הֲדוּפָה עֲדֵי קֵדָר,
בְּחוּנָה בְּכוּר יָוָן, מְעֻנָּה בְּעֹל מָדַי:
הֲיֵשׁ בִּלְתְּךָ גּוֹאֵל, וּבִלְתִּי – אֲסִיר־תִּקְוָה?
תְּנָה עֻזְּךָ לִי, כִּי לְךָ אֶתְּנָה דוֹדַי!

My love, have you forgotten how you lay between my breasts? Then why have you sold me forever to my enslavers? Did I not follow you[2] through a barren land? Let Mount Seir and Mount Paran, Sinai and Sin be my witnesses! There my love was yours, and I was your delight. Then how can you now bestow my glory upon others? I am thrust into Seir,[3] driven towards Kedar,[4] tested in the furnace of Greece, crushed under the yoke of Media. Is there any saviour but you? any prisoner of hope but I? Give me your strength, for I shall give you my love!

יָשֵׁן – וְלִבּוֹ עֵר

TO ISRAEL, IN EXILE

יָשֵׁן – וְלִבּוֹ עֵר, בּוֹעֵר וּמִשְׁתָּעֵר –
צֵא נָא וְהִנָּעֵר וּלְכָה בְּאוֹר פָּנַי.
קוּמָה, צְלַח וּרְכַב! דָּרַךְ לְךָ כּוֹכָב,
וַאֲשֶׁר בְּבוֹר שָׁכַב עָלָה לְרֹאשׁ סִינַי.
אַל תַּעֲלֹז נַפְשָׁם, הָאוֹמְרִים 'תֶּאְשַׁם

O sleeper, whose heart is awake, burning and raging, now wake and go forth, and walk in the light of My presence. Rise, and ride on! A star has come forth for you, and he who has lain in the pit will go up to the top of Sinai. Let them not exult, those who

1. From the bondage of Egypt.
2. After the exodus from Egypt.
3. The Christian nations.
4. The Muslim nations.

צִיּוֹן !׳ וְהִנֵּה שָׁם לִבִּי וְשָׁם עֵינַי.
אֶגָּל וְאֶסָּתֵר, אֶקְצֹף וְאֵעָתֵר –
מִי יַחְמֹל יוֹתֵר מִנִּי עֲלֵי בָנַי ?

say, 'Zion is desolate!' – for My heart is in Zion and My eyes are there. I reveal Myself and I conceal Myself, now I rage, now I consent – but who has more compassion than I have for My children?

יַעֲלַת־חֵן

TO THE RIVALS

יַעֲלַת חֵן, מִמְּעוֹנָהּ רְחָקָה,
אוֹהֲבָהּ כּוֹעֵס – וְלָמָּה צָחֲקָה ?
צָחֲקָה עַל בַּת אֱדוֹם וּבְנוֹת עֲרָב
הַמְבַקְשׁוֹת לַחְשֹׁק דּוֹד חָשְׁקָה.
הֵן פְּרָאִים הֵם – וְאֵיךְ יִדְמוּ אֱלֵי
יַעֲלָה עַל הַצְּבִי הִתְרַפְּקָה ?
אֵי נְבוּאָה, אֵי מְנוֹרָה, אֵי אֲרוֹן
הַבְּרִית, אֵי הַשְּׁכִינָה דְּבֵקָה ?
אַל, מְשַׂנְאַי, אַל תְּכַבּוּ אַהֲבָה,
כִּי תְכַבּוּהָ – וְהִיא אֵשׁ נִשָּׂקָה !

The lovely doe, far from her home, whose lover is angry – why did she laugh? She laughed at the daughter of Edom and the daughter of Arabia who covet her beloved. Why, they are nothing but wild asses, and how can they compare to the doe who nestled against her gazelle? Where is the spirit of prophecy found, where the lamp-stand, the Ark of the Covenant, the ever-present Shekinah? No, my rivals, do not try to quench love, for if you do, it will blaze up like fire!

יְשֵׁנָה בְּחֵיק יַלְדוּת

TO THE SOUL

יְשֵׁנָה בְּחֵיק יַלְדוּת, לְמָתַי תִּשְׁכְּבִי ?
דְּעִי כִּי נְעוּרִים כַּנְּעֹרֶת נִנְעֲרוּ.
הֲלָעַד יְמֵי הַשַּׁחֲרוּת ? קוּמִי צְאִי,
רְאִי מַלְאֲכֵי שֵׂיבָה בְּמוּסָר שִׁחֲרוּ.
וְהִתְנַעֲרִי מִן הַזְּמָן, כַּצְּפָּרִים
אֲשֶׁר מֵרְסִיסֵי לַיְלָה יִתְנַעֲרוּ.
דְּאִי כַדְּרוֹר לִמְצֹא דְרוֹר מִמַּעֲלָךְ
וּמִתּוֹלְדוֹת יָמִים כְּיַמִּים יִסְעֲרוּ.
הֲיִי אַחֲרֵי מַלְכֵּךְ מְרַדֶּפֶת, בְּסוֹד
נְשָׁמוֹת אֲשֶׁר אֶל טוּב יְיָ נָהֲרוּ.

Oh, you that sleep in the bosom of childhood, how long will you rest there? Know that youth is shaken off like straw! Do you think boyhood lasts for ever? Get up, go out and see the grey heralds, who have come to rebuke you. Shake off Time as birds shake off the dew-drops of the night. Soar like a swallow to find freedom from your sins and from the vagaries of Fortune, that rage like a sea. Pursue your King, at one with the souls who flock towards the bounty of God.

אֲדֹנָי, נֶגְדְּךָ כָּל תַּאֲוָתִי

FOR THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

אֲדֹנָי, נֶגְדְּךָ כָּל תַּאֲוָתִי,
וְאִם לֹא אַעֲלֶנָּה עַל שְׂפָתִי.
רְצוֹנְךָ אֶשְׁאֲלָה רֶגַע – וְאֶגְוַע,
וּמִי יִתֵּן וְתָבוֹא שֶׁאֱלָתִי,
וְאַפְקִיד אֶת שְׁאָר רוּחִי בְּיָדְךָ,
וְיָשַׁנְתִּי, וְעָרְבָה לִּי שְׁנָתִי!
בְּרָחְקִי מִמְּךָ – מוֹתִי בְחַיַּי,
וְאִם אֶדְבַּק בְּךָ – חַיַּי בְּמוֹתִי.
אֲבָל לֹא אֵדְעָה בַּמָּה אֲקַדֵּם,
וּמַה תִּהְיֶה עֲבוֹדָתִי וְדָתִי.

Lord, all my longing is before You, even though it does not pass my lips. Grant me Your favour for even a moment, and I will die. If only You would grant my wish! I will commit my spirit into Your keeping, I will sleep, and my sleep will be pleasant. When I am far from You my life is death; but if I cling to You, my death is life. But I do not know what to offer You, what my service and my worship should be.

דְּרָכֶיךָ, אֲדֹנָי, לַמְּדֵנִי,
וְשׁוּב מִמַּאֲסַר סִכְלוּת שְׁבוּתִי.
וְהוֹרֵנִי בְּעוֹד יֶשׁ בִּי יְכֹלֶת
לְהִתְעַנּוֹת, וְאַל תִּבְזֶה עֱנוּתִי,
בְּטֶרֶם יוֹם אֱהִי עָלַי לְמַשָּׂא,
וְיוֹם יִכְבַּד קְצָתִי עַל קְצָתִי,
וְאֶכָּנַע בְּעַל־כָּרְחִי, וְיֹאכַל
עֲצָמַי עָשׁ וְנִלְאוּ מְשְׂאֵתִי,
וְאֶסַּע אֶל מְקוֹם נָסְעוּ אֲבוֹתַי
וּבִמְקוֹם תַּחֲנוֹתָם תַּחֲנוֹתִי.
כְּגֵר תּוֹשָׁב אֲנִי עַל גַּב אֲדָמָה,
וְאוּלָם כִּי בְּבִטְנָהּ נַחֲלָתִי.

Show me Your ways, O Lord, restore me from the bondage of folly. Teach me while I still have the strength to endure – do not scorn my plight! – before I become a burden to myself and my limbs weigh heavy on each other; before I yield unwillingly, and my bones wither and are unable to bear me; before I journey to where my fathers have gone, and come to rest where they are resting. I am like a stranger upon the earth, but my true home is in her womb.

נְעוּרַי עַד הֲלֹם עָשׂוּ לְנַפְשָׁם,
וּמָתַי גַּם אֲנִי אֶעֱשֶׂה לְבֵיתִי?
וְהָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר נָתַן בְּלִבִּי
מְנָעַנִי לְבַקֵּשׁ אַחֲרִיתִי.

My youth has thus far had its pleasure, but when shall I, too, provide for my household? The world and its delights, which He put in my heart, have kept

וְאֵיכָה אֶעֱבֹד יוֹצְרִי – בְּעוֹדִי
אֲסִיר יִצְרִי וְעֶבֶד תַּאֲוָתִי?
וְאֵיכָה מַעֲלָה רָמָה אֲבַקֵּשׁ –
וּמָחָר תִּהְיֶה רִמָּה אֲחוֹתִי?
וְאֵיךְ יִיטַב בְּיוֹם טוֹבָה לְבָבִי,
וְלֹא אֵדַע – הֲיִיטַב מָחֳרָתִי?
וְהַיָּמִים וְהַלֵּילוֹת עֲרֵבִים
לְכַלּוֹת אֶת שְׁאֵרִי עַד כְּלוֹתִי,
וְלָרוּחַ יְזָרוּן מֶחֱצִיתִי,
וְלֶעָפָר יְשִׁיבוּן מֶחֱצִיתִי.

me from seeking my aim. And how can I worship my Maker while I am still captive to my lust, slave to my desire? How can I aspire to a high rank, when tomorrow the worm will be my sister? How can I be cheerful on a happy day, when I do not know if there will be happiness tomorrow? The days and nights have pledged to consume my flesh, to scatter half of me to the winds and return the other half to the dust.

וּמָה אֹמַר – וְיִצְרִי יִרְדְּפֵנִי
כְּאוֹיֵב מִנְּעוּרַי עַד בְּלוֹתִי?
וּמַה לִּי בַּזְּמָן – אִם לֹא רְצוֹנְךָ?
וְאִם אֵינְךָ מְנָתִי – מַה מְּנָתִי?
אֲנִי מִמַּעֲשִׂים שׁוֹלָל וְעָרֹם,
וְצִדְקָתְךָ לְבַדָּהּ הִיא כְסוּתִי.
וְעוֹד מָה אַאֲרִיךְ לָשׁוֹן וְאֶשְׁאַל?
אֲדֹנָי, נֶגְדְּךָ כָּל תַּאֲוָתִי!

What more can I say? My passions hound me like an enemy from youth to withered old age. Does Time hold anything for me except Your favour? And if You are not my lot, what other lot do I have? I am stripped naked, devoid of good works, and only Your righteousness is my covering. Then why do I go on wagging my tongue and pleading? O Lord, all my longing is before You!

לִקְרַאת מְקוֹר חַיֵּי אֱמֶת

THE TRUE VISION

לִקְרַאת מְקוֹר חַיֵּי אֱמֶת אָרוּצָה –
עַל כֵּן בְּחַיֵּי שָׁוְא וָרִיק אָקוּצָה.
לִרְאוֹת פְּנֵי מַלְכִּי מְגַמָּתִי לְבָד,
לֹא אֶעֱרֹץ בִּלְתּוֹ וְלֹא אַעֲרִיצָה.
מִי יִתְּנֵנִי לַחֲזוֹתוֹ בַחֲלוֹם!
אִישַׁן שְׁנַת עוֹלָם וְלֹא אָקִיצָה.
לוּ אֶחֱזֶה פָנָיו בְּלִבִּי בָיְתָה,
לֹא שָׁאֲלוּ עֵינַי לְהַבִּיט חוּצָה.

I am running towards the fountain of true life; therefore, I spurn the life of lies and trifles. To look at the face of my King – that is my only wish. None but Him do I fear and venerate. If only I could see Him in a dream! Oh, I would sleep forever and never wake up. If I could see His face inside my heart, my eyes would no more wish to look outside.

יָהּ, אָנָה אֶמְצָאֲךָ?

LORD, WHERE SHALL I FIND YOU?

יָהּ, אָנָה אֶמְצָאֲךָ? מְקוֹמְךָ נַעֲלֶה וְנֶעְלָם!
וְאָנָה לֹא אֶמְצָאֲךָ? כְּבוֹדְךָ מָלֵא עוֹלָם!

Lord, where shall I find You? Your place is lofty and secret. And where shall I not find you? The whole earth is full of Your glory!

הַנִּמְצָא בִקְרָבִים, אַפְסֵי אֶרֶץ הֵקִים.
הַמִּשְׂגָּב לַקְּרוֹבִים, הַמִּבְטָח לָרְחוֹקִים.
אַתָּה יוֹשֵׁב כְּרוּבִים, אַתָּה שׁוֹכֵן שְׁחָקִים.
תִּתְהַלֵּל בִּצְבָאֲךָ – וְאַתְּ עַל רֹאשׁ מַהֲלָלָם.
גַּלְגַּל לֹא יְשָׂאֲךָ – אַף כִּי חַדְרֵי אוּלָם!

You are found in man's innermost heart, yet You fixed earth's boundaries. You are a strong tower for those who are near, and the trust of those who are far. You are enthroned on the cherubim,[1] yet You dwell in the heights of heaven. You are praised by Your hosts, but even their praise is not worthy of You. The sphere of heaven cannot contain You; how much less the chambers of the Temple!

וּבְהִנָּשְׂאֲךָ עֲלֵיהֶם עַל כֵּס נִשָּׂא וָרָם,
אַתָּה קָרוֹב אֲלֵיהֶם מֵרוּחָם וּמִבְּשָׂרָם.
פִּיהֶם יָעִיד בָּהֶם, כִּי אֵין בִּלְתְּךָ יוֹצְרָם.
מִי זֶה לֹא יִירָאֲךָ – וְעֹל מַלְכוּתְךָ עֻלָּם?
אוֹ מִי לֹא יִקְרָאֲךָ – וְאַתָּה נוֹתֵן אָכְלָם?

Even when You rise above Your hosts on a throne, high and exalted, You are nearer to them than their own bodies and souls. Their mouths attest that they have no Maker except You. Who shall not fear You? All bear the yoke of Your kingdom. And who shall not call to You? It is You who give them their food.

דָּרַשְׁתִּי קִרְבָתְךָ, בְּכָל לִבִּי קְרָאתִיךָ,
וּבְצֵאתִי לִקְרָאתְךָ – לִקְרָאתִי מְצָאתִיךָ,
וּבְפִלְאֵי גְבוּרָתְךָ בַּקֹּדֶשׁ חֲזִיתִיךָ.
מִי יֹאמַר לֹא רָאֲךָ? הֵן שָׁמַיִם וְחֵילָם
יַגִּידוּ מוֹרָאֲךָ בְּלִי נִשְׁמַע קוֹלָם!

I have sought to come near You, I have called to You with all my heart; and when I went out towards You, I found You coming towards me. I look upon Your wondrous power with awe. Who can say that he has not seen You? The heavens and their legions proclaim Your dread – without a sound.

1. Above the Ark.

הַאֻמְנָם כִּי יֵשֵׁב אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם ?
וּמַה יַּחְשֹׁב כָּל חוֹשֵׁב, אֲשֶׁר בֶּעָפָר יְסוֹדָם –
וְאַתָּה, קָדוֹשׁ, יוֹשֵׁב תְּהִלּוֹתָם וּכְבוֹדָם!
חַיּוֹת יוֹדוּ פִלְאָךְ, הָעוֹמְדוֹת בְּרוּם עוֹלָם.
עַל רָאשֵׁיהֶם כִּסְאָךְ – וְאַתָּה נוֹשֵׂא כֻלָּם

But can God really dwell among men? Their foundations are dust – what can they conceive of Him? Yet You, O Holy One, make Your home where they sing Your praises and Your glory. The living creatures, standing on the summit of the world, praise Your wonders. Your throne is above their heads, yet it is You who carry them all!

הֲיֵדְעוּ הַדְּמָעוֹת

TOMBSTONE INSCRIPTION

הֲיֵדְעוּ הַדְּמָעוֹת מִי שְׁפָכָם,
וְיֵדְעוּ הַלְּבָבוֹת מִי הֲפָכָם ?
הֲפָכָם בּוֹא מְאוֹרָם תּוֹךְ רְגָבִים,
וְלֹא יֵדְעוּ רְגָבִים מָה בְּתוֹכָם.
בְּתוֹכָם שַׂר וְגָדוֹל, תָּם וְיָשָׁר,
יְרֵא הָאֵל וְאִישׁ נָבוֹן וְחָכָם.

Do these tears know who made them fall? Do these hearts know who made them recoil? Oh, they recoiled because their sun sank into the dust, and the dust does not know what it holds. It holds a princely man, blameless and upright, a God-fearing man, discreet and wise.

הָהּ, בִּתִּי

A MOTHER'S LAMENT

'הָהּ, בִּתִּי, הֲשָׁכַחַתְּ מִשְׁכָּנֵךְ ?
כִּי לִשְׁאוֹל נָסְעוּ נוֹשְׂאֵי אֲרוֹנֵךְ,
וְאֵין חֶלְקִי מִמֵּךְ רַק זִכְרוֹנֵךְ.
נַאֲחוֹנֵן אֶת עַפְרוֹת צִיּוּנֵךְ
עֵת אָסוּר לִשְׁאֹל שְׁלוֹמֵךְ – וְאֵינֵךְ:
כִּי הַמָּוֶת יַפְרִיד בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵךְ.

'Alas, my daughter, have you forgotten your home? The coffin bearers have taken you to the grave, and I have nothing left of you but your memory. When I come to greet you, and do not find you, I take pity on the dust of your tomb; for death has parted us.

בַּת מוּצֵאת מֵחֶדֶר הוֹרָתָהּ –
אֵיךְ אֶחְיֶה וּמִנַּפְשִׁי גְּזָרְתָהּ ?
צוּר אֲבַקַּע עֵת אֶרְאֶה צוּרָתָהּ.
אֵיךְ תִּשְׁנֶה לְבָנָה מֵהַדְרָתָהּ!

'O the daughter is taken from her mother's room! How can I live? Her limbs were part of me. My tears cleave rocks when I remember her. How the lustre of the moon has been tarnished!

שָׁם בִּשְׁאוֹל אֶרְאֶה אֶת חֲתֻנָּתָהּ,
אֵיךְ תָּשִׁים גּוּשׁ עָפָר חֻפָּתָהּ,
אֵיךְ מָתְקוּ לָהּ רִגְבֵי קְבוּרָתָהּ.
מַר לִי מָר, בִּתִּי, עַל חֶסְרוֹנֵךְ:
כִּי הַמָּוֶת יַפְרִיד בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵךְ. [...]

There, in the grave, I see her being wed: clods of earth are her canopy, and the dust of the pit is sweet to her. O my daughter, your loss is bitter to me; for death has parted us.

הָהּ, בִּתִּי, הַכְרֵעַ הִכְרַעְתִּנִי!'
'אוֹי, אִמִּי, אוֹי לִי כִּי יְלִדְתִּנִי.
אַךְ הַיּוֹם אֵיךְ מָאוֹס מְאַסְתִּנִי?
כִּי לִבְכוֹר מָוֶת גִּדַּלְתִּנִי.
בְּהַגִּיעַ תּוֹר, לְנַפְשִׁי שִׁלַּחְתִּנִי,
וּבַעֲטֶרֶת עָפָר עִטַּרְתִּנִי,
וּבְחֻפַּת אֲבַדּוֹן הוֹשַׁבְתִּנִי.
בְּעַל־כָּרְחֵךְ, אִמִּי, לֹא בִרְצוֹנֵךְ:
כִּי הַמָּוֶת יַפְרִיד בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵךְ.' [...]

'Alas, my daughter, what sorrow you have brought me!' 'Alas, alas, my mother, that you ever gave me birth. How, on this day, how could you cast me off? Oh, you brought me up to be Death's bride! When my turn came, you sent me away alone; you crowned me with a garland of dust; you set me down in the bridal-bower of destruction. O my mother, it was against your will, it was not of your doing, for death has parted us.'

יוֹם אַכְפִּי הִכְבַּדְתִּי

THE MURDER OF ZECHARIAH

יוֹם אַכְפִּי הִכְבַּדְתִּי וַיִּכָּפְלוּ עֲווֹנַי,
בְּשָׁלְחִי יָד בְּדַם נָבִיא בַּחֲצַר מִקְדַּשׁ אֲדֹנָי.
וְלֹא כִסַּתְהוּ אֲדָמָה עַד בּוֹא חֶרֶב מוֹנַי,
וְלֹא שָׁקַט עֲדֵי הֻקַם וְעַד הִפְלִיא פְּלִילִיָּה –
וַיֶּרֶב בְּבַת יְהוּדָה תַּאֲנִיָּה וַאֲנִיָּה.

On that day I made my burden heavier and multiplied my crimes when I shed the prophet's blood in the court of the Lord's temple. The earth would not cover it until my enemies[1] came with the sword; it would not rest until it was avenged, wreaking terrible judgements. Oh, He brought sorrow upon sorrow to the daughter of Judah.

הָיָה הוֹלֵךְ וְסוֹעֵר עַד בּוֹא רַב טַבָּחִים,
וּבָא אֶל מִקְדַּשׁ אֲדֹנָי וְרָאָה דָמִים רוֹתְחִים.
וַיִּשְׁאַל בַּעֲבוּר זֹאת לַכֹּהֲנִים הַזּוֹבְחִים,

The blood grew more and more tempestuous until Nebuzaradan, the commander of the guard, arrived. When he entered the Lord's temple, he discovered the seething blood. He asked the priests who were offering

1. The Babylonian armies, under the command of Nebuzaradan (2 Kings 25.8).

וַיַּעֲנוּהוּ: ׳אֵין זֶה כִּי אִם דַּם הַזְּבָחִים׳.
גַּם הוּא זָבַח לַחֲקֹר מַה זֶּה וְעַל מֶה הָיָה
וָאֹמַר לְנַפְשִׁי: זֹאת חַטָּאתֵךְ וְזֶה פִּרְיָהּ!

sacrifices, what it signified; and they replied: 'It is nothing but the blood of the sacrifices.' Then he, too, slaughtered a beast to see if this was so and how it came about; and I said to myself: 'This is your sin, and this is its fruit.'

וּבְכָל זֹאת לֹא שָׁקַט וְעוֹדוֹ כַּיָּם נִגְרָשׁ.
וַיְבַקֵּשׁ הַדָּבָר וַיִּמָּצֵא מְפֹרָשׁ,
כִּי דַּם אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים עַל לֹא חָמָס שֹׁרַשׁ.
וַיֹּאמֶר נְבוּזַרְאֲדָן: ׳וְגַם דָּמוֹ הִנֵּה נִדְרָשׁ!
אִסְפוּ לִי הַכֹּהֲנִים וְהוֹצִיאוּם מִבֵּית יָהּ,
וְלֹא אֶשְׁקֹט עַד יִשְׁקֹט דַּם הַנָּבִיא זְכַרְיָה

Still, the blood would not rest; it surged like the sea. Then, after questioning, the truth came to light: this was the blood of the man of God, cut down though he had done no wrong. Nebuzaradan said: 'The time has come to pay for his blood. Gather all the priests, take them out of the house of God. I shall not rest until the blood of the prophet Zechariah finds rest.'

דָּקַר יְשִׁישִׁים לְמֵאוֹת וּבַחוּרִים לְרִבּוֹאוֹת,
וַיּוֹרֶד לַטֶּבַח כֹּהֲנֵי אֲדֹנָי צְבָאוֹת,
וְתִינוֹקוֹת שֶׁל בֵּית רַב, וְעֵינֵי אָבוֹת רוֹאוֹת.
וְאֵין שֶׁקֶט לְדַם נָבִיא, וַיְהִי לְמוֹפֵת וּלְאוֹת!
וְחֶרֶב צַר נוֹקֶמֶת וְהַקִּרְיָה הוֹמִיָּה –
בְּכָל זֹאת לֹא שָׁב אַפּוֹ וְעוֹד יָדוֹ נְטוּיָה.

He murdered old men by the hundreds, and young men by the tens of thousands. He slaughtered the priests of the Lord of hosts, and school-children before the very eyes of their fathers. Still the blood of the prophet would not rest. This was a sign and a portent. The enemy's sword wreaked vengeance, the city was filled with uproar – yet His anger was not turned back and His hand was stretched out still!

הוֹסִיף לַהֲרֹג נָשִׁים עִם יוֹנְקֵי שָׁדַיִם,
וְדָם עוֹלֶה בֵּינֵיהֶם כַּיָּם וִיאוֹר מִצְרַיִם,
עֲדֵי נָשָׂא נְבוּזַרְאֲדָן עֵינָיו לַשָּׁמַיִם
וַיֹּאמַר: ׳הַאֵין דַּי לְדָם בִּבְנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם?
הֲכָלָה אַתָּה עוֹשֶׂה אֶת שְׁאֵרִית הַשְּׁבִיָּה
וְאָז שָׁקַט דַּם נָקִי, וְחֶרֶב נָקָם רָוְיָה.

Then he killed women as well as babes at the breast, and the blood rose among them like a sea, like the river of Egypt, until Nebuzaradan raised his eyes to heaven and said: 'Will this blood not be content with the blood of Jerusalem's daughters? Are You going to wipe out the remnant of Israel?' Only then did the innocent blood come to rest; the sword of vengeance had drunk its fill.

יַעֲלַת־חֵן, רַחֲמִי לְבָב

THE SENSITIVE DOE

יַעֲלַת חֵן, רַחֲמִי לְבָב שְׁכַנְתִּיו מֵעוֹדֵךְ.
תֵּדְעִי כִּי יוֹם תְּנוּדִי – אֲסוֹנִי בִּנְדוֹדֵךְ.
גַּם בְּעֵת יֶהֶרְסוּ עֵינַי לְהַבִּיט אֶל הוֹדֵךְ,
מִלְחָיַיִךְ פָּגְעוּ בִי נְחָשִׁים יַפְרִישׁוּ,
כִּי חֲמָתָם כָּאֵשׁ יַחְתּוּ, וְאוֹתִי יְגָרְשׁוּ.

O graceful doe, pity this heart in which you have dwelled all your life. Know that the day you leave me, your going will be my ruin. And even now, when my eyes dare to glance at your splendour, I am stung by the serpents that guard your cheeks, for their poison burns like fire and they drive me out.

שִׁלְּלָה לִבִּי בְּבַדִּים עֲלֵי לֵב מֻנָּחִים:
לֵב כְּמוֹ אֶבֶן וְרַק יִגְמֹל שְׁנֵי תַפּוּחִים!
נִצְּבוּ וַיִּהְיוּ לִשְׂמֹאל וְיָמִין כִּרְמָחִים.
מוֹקְדֵיהֶם הֵם בִּלְבָבִי – וְהֵם לֹא נִגָּשׁוּ,
גַּם בְּפִיהֶם דָּמִי שָׁתוּ – וְלֹא הִתְבּוֹשָׁשׁוּ!

She ensnared my heart with the breasts that lie upon her heart - a heart of stone, and yet it put forth two apples! They stand guard, to the left and to the right, like lances. Their fiery [nipples burn] in my heart, though they have never come near me. Their mouths have drunk my blood, they felt no shame at all!

יַעֲלָה חֻקֵּי דָת הָאֵל בְּעֵינֶיהָ תָּפֵר,
כִּי תְמִיתֵנִי בִּצְדִיָּה אֲבָל אֵין לִי כֹפֶר.
הַרְאִיתֶם עוֹד לֵב אַרְיֵה וְעַפְעַפֵּי עֹפֶר?
לָמְדוּ לִטְרֹף כְּלָבִיא, וְחִצִּים יִלְטֹשׁוּ,
דַּם לְבָבִי יִמְצוּ יִשְׁתּוּ, וְנַפְשִׁי בִּקֵּשׁוּ.

This doe violates the laws of God with her eyes: she kills me with malice aforethought, yet no one avenges me. Have you ever seen the heart of a lion joined to the eyelids of a gazelle? Her eyelids have learned to tear like a lion, they hurl sharpened arrows at me, they drain my heart's blood to the dregs. They are out for my life.

יוֹם אֲנִי מִיֵּין דּוֹדֶיהָ כְּשִׁכּוֹר מִתְרוֹנֵן,
כִּי שְׁלוֹמֶיהָ תַפְגִּיעַ וְעָלַי תִּתְלוֹנֵן
עַל יְדֵי צִירִים; וּבְבוֹאָם, אֲלֵיהֶם תִּתְחַנֵּן:
'מַלְאֲכֵי שָׁלוֹם, פִּגְעוּ בִי, שְׁנוּ גַּם שַׁלֵּשׁוּ!'
מַאֲמָרָם לִבִּי פִתּוּ וְרוּחִי חִדֵּשׁוּ.

One day, when I was reeling like a drunkard, longing for the wine of her love, she dispatched envoys to me bearing greetings and complaints; and when they returned to her, she begged them: 'O messengers of peace, come again and yet again!' These tidings seduced my heart and revived my spirit.

יוֹם בְּגַנָּהּ רָעוּ יָדַי וְדַדֶּיהָ עִשּׂוּ,
אָמְרָה: 'הֶרֶף יָדֶיךָ – הֲכִי עוֹד לֹא נֻסּוּ!'
נַאֲמָרִים לִי הֶחְלִיקָה לְבָבִי הֵמַסּוּ:
'גן מתא נקש, יא חביבי, פאנכר דנאשו
אלגלאלה רכיצה בשתאת הפרמשו.'

But one day when my hands were grazing in her garden and fondling her breasts, she said: 'Now take away your hands – they are not skilful enough.'[1] And her words were so seductive that they melted my heart: 'Do not touch me, friend, I do not like those who hurt me. My breasts are soft and sensitive. Enough! I shall refuse one and all!'[2]

עָפְרָה תְּכַבֵּס

THE LAUNDRESS

עָפְרָה תְּכַבֵּס אֶת בְּגָדֶיהָ בְּמֵי
דִמְעַי וְתִשְׁטָחֵם לְשֶׁמֶשׁ זָהֳרָהּ:
לֹא שָׁאֲלָה מֵי הָעֲיָנוֹת – עִם שְׁתֵּי
עֵינַי, וְלֹא שֶׁמֶשׁ – לְיֹפִי תָאֳרָהּ.

My love washes her clothes in the water of my tears and spreads them out in the sun of her beauty. She has no need of spring-water – she has my two eyes; nor of the sun – she has her own radiance.

מַה לָּךְ, צְבִיָּה

SONG OF FAREWELL

מַה לָּךְ, צְבִיָּה, תִּמְנְעִי צִירַיִךְ
מִדּוֹד, צְלָעָיו מָלְאוּ צִירַיִךְ?
לֹא תֵדְעִי כִּי אֵין לְדוֹדֵךְ מִזְּמַן
בִּלְתִּי שְׁמֹעַ קוֹל שְׁלוֹמוֹתַיִךְ?
אִם הַפְּרִידָה עַל שְׁנֵינוּ נִגְזְרָה –
עִמְדִי מְעַט עַד אֶחֱזֶה פָּנַיִךְ.
לֹא אֵדְעָה אִם בֵּין צְלָעַי נֶעֱצַר
לִבִּי, וְאִם יֵלֵךְ לְמַסָּעַיִךְ.

Why, O fair one, do you withhold your envoys from the lover whose heart is filled with pain of you? Do you not know that Time means nothing to your beloved, unless he hear your welcoming voice? If we two are doomed to parting, stay a while and let me look at your face. I do not know if my heart has come to a stop between my ribs, or else has wandered off with you. Oh,

1. Or, 'they [my breasts] have not yet experienced such things'.
2. The last two lines are in mixed Arabic and Romance. The meaning is uncertain.

חֵי אַהֲבָה, זִכְרִי יְמֵי חִשְׁקֵךְ כְּמוֹ
אֶזְכֹּר אֲנִי לֵילוֹת תְּשׁוּקוֹתַיִךְ.
כַּאֲשֶׁר דְּמוּתֵךְ בַּחֲלוֹמִי יַעֲבֹר,
כֵּן אֶעְבְּרָה־נָּא בַחֲלוֹמוֹתַיִךְ.
בֵּינִי וּבֵינֵךְ יָם דְּמָעוֹת יֶהֱמוּ
גַּלָּיו, וְלֹא אוּכַל עֲבֹר אֵלַיִךְ.
אַךְ לוּ פְּעָמַיִךְ לְעָבְרוֹ קָרְבוּ,
אָז נִבְקְעוּ מֵימָיו לְכַף רַגְלַיִךְ.
לוּ אַחֲרֵי מוֹתִי בְּאָזְנַי יַעֲלֶה
קוֹל פַּעֲמוֹן זָהָב עֲלֵי שׁוּלַיִךְ!
אוֹ תִשְׁאֲלִי לִשְׁלוֹם יְדִידֵךְ, מִשְּׁאוֹל
אֶשְׁאַל בְּדוֹדַיִךְ וּבִשְׁלוֹמַיִךְ! [...]

for the life of love, remember the days of your desire, as I remember the nights of your passion. And just as your image moves through my dreams, let mine move through yours. A sea of tears roars between us, and I cannot cross its waves to reach you. But if your steps approached to cross them, the waters would divide before your feet. Oh, after my death, let me still hear the sound of the golden bells on the hem of your skirt. And if you then ask how your beloved is, I, from the grave, will send you my love and my blessings!

מִי יִתְּנֵנִי אֶחְיֶה עַד אֶאֱרֶה
בֹּשֶׂם וּמֹר מִבֵּין הֲלִיכוֹתַיִךְ.
לֹא אֶשְׁמְעָה קוֹלֵךְ, אֲבָל אֶשְׁמַע עֲלֵי
סִתְרֵי לְבָבִי קוֹל צְעָדוֹתַיִךְ. [...]

If only I could live until I gather myrrh and spices from among your footprints! I cannot hear your voice, but in the covert of my heart I hear the sound of your steps.

בִּי הַצְּבִי, בִּי אֲדוֹנִי

THE CRUEL LOVER

בִּי הַצְּבִי, בִּי אֲדוֹנִי,
יֵקַר בְּעֵינְךָ יְגוֹנִי,
פֶּן יִקְרֵנִי אֲסוֹנִי.
אַט, אַט, אַט בְּדָמִי,
כִּי רַק בְּיָדְךָ שְׁלוֹמִי!

O my fair youth, my lord, take my grief to heart, lest disaster overtake me. Oh, gently, deal gently with my blood, for my fate is in your hands alone.

לִבִּי לְבֵית־אֵל וְלִפְנִיאֵל מְאֹד יֶהֱמֶה
וּלְמַחֲנַיִם וְכָל פִּגְעֵי טְהוֹרָיִךְ.
שָׁם הַשְּׁכִינָה שְׁכֵנָה לָךְ, וְהַיּוֹצְרֵךְ
פָּתַח לְמוּל שַׁעֲרֵי שַׁחַק שְׁעָרָיִךְ,
וּכְבוֹד אֲדֹנָי לְבַד הָיָה מְאוֹרֵךְ, וְאֵין
שֶׁמֶשׁ וְסַהַר וְכוֹכָבִים מְאִירָיִךְ.
אֶבְחַר לְנַפְשִׁי לְהִשְׁתַּפֵּךְ בְּמָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר
רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים שְׁפוּכָה עַל בְּחִירָיִךְ.
אַתְּ בֵּית מְלוּכָה וְאַתְּ כִּסֵּא אֲדֹנָי, וְאִם
יָשְׁבוּ עֲבָדִים עֲלֵי כִסְאוֹת גְּבִירָיִךְ!

My heart longs for Bethel and Penuel, for Mahanaim[1] and for all the shrines of your pure ones. There the Shekinah dwelled within you, and your Maker opened your gates to face the gates of heaven. There the glory of the Lord was your only light; it was not the sun, moon, or stars that shone over you. Oh, I would pour out my life in the very place where once the spirit of God was poured out upon your chosen ones. You are the seat of royalty, you are the throne of the Lord – though slaves now sit upon your princes' thrones!

מִי יִתְּנֵנִי מְשׁוֹטֵט בַּמְּקוֹמוֹת אֲשֶׁר
נִגְלוּ אֱלֹהִים לְחוֹזַיִךְ וְצִירָיִךְ.
מִי יַעֲשֶׂה לִּי כְנָפַיִם וְאַרְחִיק נְדֹד,
אָנִיד לְבִתְרֵי לְבָבִי בֵּין בְּתָרָיִךְ.
אֶפֹּל לְאַפַּי עֲלֵי אַרְצֵךְ וְאֶרְצֶה אֲבָ־
נַיִךְ מְאֹד וַאֲחוֹנֵן אֶת עֲפָרָיִךְ.
אֶבְכֶּה בְּעָמְדִי עֲלֵי קִבְרוֹת אֲבוֹתַי וְאֶשְׁ־
תּוֹמֵם בְּחֶבְרוֹן עֲלֵי מִבְחַר קְבָרָיִךְ.
אֶעְבֹּר בְּיַעְרֵךְ וְכַרְמִלֵּךְ וְאֶעְמֹד בְּגִלְ־
עָדֵךְ וְאֶשְׁתּוֹמְמָה אֶל הַר עֲבָרָיִךְ –
הַר הָעֲבָרִים וְהֹר הָהָר, אֲשֶׁר שָׁם שְׁנֵי
אוֹרִים גְּדוֹלִים, מְאִירַיִךְ וּמוֹרָיִךְ.
חַיֵּי נְשָׁמוֹת – אֲוִיר אַרְצֵךְ, וּמִמָּר־דְּרוֹר
אַבְקַת עֲפָרֵךְ, וְנֹפֶת צוּף – נְהָרָיִךְ!
יִנְעַם לְנַפְשִׁי הֲלֹךְ עָרֹם וְיָחֵף עֲלֵי
חָרְבוֹת שְׁמָמָה אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ דְבִירָיִךְ,

If only I could roam through those places where God was revealed to your prophets and heralds! Who will give me wings, so that I may wander far away? I would carry the pieces of my broken heart over your rugged mountains.[2] I would bow down, my face on your ground; I would love your stones; your dust would move me to pity. I would weep, as I stood by my ancestors' graves, I would grieve, in Hebron, over the choicest of burial places![3] I would walk in your forests and meadows, stop in Gilead, marvel at Mount Abarim; Mount Abarim and Mount Hor, where the two great luminaries [Moses and Aaron] rest, those who guided you and gave you light. The air of your land is the very life of the soul, the grains of your dust are flowing myrrh, your rivers are honey from the comb. It would delight my heart to walk naked and barefoot among the desolate ruins where your shrines once stood; where

1. All sites figuring in the life of Jacob.
2. The hills of Bether (Song of Songs 2.17), in the vicinity of Jerusalem.
3. The burial cave of the Patriarchs (Genesis 23.17).

בִּמְקוֹם אֲרוֹנְךָ אֲשֶׁר נִגְנַז, וּבִמְקוֹם כְּרוּ־
בֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר שָׁכְנוּ חַדְרֵי חֲדָרֶיךָ.
אָגֹז וְאַשְׁלִיךְ פְּאֵר נִזְרִי וְאֶקֹּב זְמָן,
חִלֵּל בְּאֶרֶץ טְמֵאָה אֶת נְזִירָיִךְ. [...]

אַשְׁרֵי מְחַכֶּה וְיַגִּיעַ וְיִרְאֶה עֲלוֹת
אוֹרֵךְ וְיִבָּקְעוּ עָלָיו שְׁחָרָיִךְ,
לִרְאוֹת בְּטוֹבַת בְּחִירַיִךְ, וְלַעְלֹז בְּשִׂמְ־
חָתֵךְ בְּשׁוּבֵךְ אֱלֵי קַדְמַת נְעוּרָיִךְ!

your Ark was hidden away,[1] where your cherubim once dwelled in the innermost chamber. I shall cut off my glorious hair and throw it away, I shall curse Time that has defiled your pure ones in the polluted lands [of exile].

Happy is he who waits and lives to see your light rising, your dawn breaking forth over him! He shall see your chosen people prospering, he shall rejoice in your joy when you regain the days of your youth.

וְאַל יָמוּט

THE POET IMAGINES HIS VOYAGE

[...] וְאַל יָמוּט בְּלֵב יַמִּים לְבָבְךָ
וְהָרִים תֶּחֱזֶה מָטִים וּמָשִׁים,
וּמַלָּחִים יְדֵיהֶם כִּמְלָחִים,
וְחַכְמֵי הַחֲרָשִׁים מַחֲרִישִׁים.
שְׂמֵחִים הוֹלְכִים נֹכַח פְּנֵיהֶם —
וְשָׁבִים אֶל אֲחוֹרֵיהֶם וּבוֹשִׁים.
וְאֶקְיָנוֹס לְפָנֶיךָ לְמָנוֹס —
וְאֵין מִבְרָח לְךָ כִּי אִם יְקוּשִׁים!
וְיָמוּטוּ וְיָנוּטוּ קְלָעִים,
וְיָנוּעוּ וְיָזוּעוּ קְרָשִׁים,
וְיַד רוּחַ מְצַחֶקֶת בְּמַיִם,
כְּנוֹשְׂאֵי הָעֳמָרִים בַּדְּיָשִׁים,
וּפַעַם תַּעֲשֶׂה מֵהֶם גְּרָנוֹת,
וּפַעַם תַּעֲשֶׂה מֵהֶם גְּדִישִׁים.
בְּעֵת הִתְגַּבְּרָם דָּמוּ אֲרָיוֹת,
וְעֵת הֶחָלְשָׁם דָּמוּ נְחָשִׁים,

Let not your heart tremble in the heart of the sea, when you see mountains trembling and heaving, and sailors' hands as limp as rags, and soothsayers struck dumb. When they set their course, they were full of joy, but now they are beaten back in shame. The whole ocean is yours to escape in, but your only refuge is the snare of the deep. The sails quiver and quake, the beams creak and shudder. The hand of the wind toys with the waves, like reapers at the threshing: now it flattens them out, now it stacks them up. When the waves gather strength, they are like lions; when they weaken, they are like

1. According to Talmudic legend, King Josiah hid the holy Ark from the enemy.

וְרִאשׁוֹנִים דְּלָקוּם אַחֲרוֹנִים
כִּצְפְעוֹנִים וְאֵין לָהֶם לְחָשִׁים. [...]

וְרֶגַע יִשְׁתְּקוּ גַלִּים, וְיִדְמוּ
עֲדָרִים עַל פְּנֵי אֶרֶץ נְטוּשִׁים.
וְהַלַּיִל – כְּבוֹא שֶׁמֶשׁ בְּמַעֲלוֹת
צְבָא מָרוֹם, וְעָלָיו שַׂר חֲמִשִּׁים –
כְּכוּשִׁית מִשְׁבְּצוֹת זָהָב לְבוּשָׁהּ,
וְכִתְכֵלֶת בְּמִלּוּאַת גְּבִישִׁים.
וְכוֹכָבִים בְּלֵב הַיָּם נְבוֹכִים
כְּגֵרִים מִמְּעוֹנֵיהֶם גְּרוּשִׁים,
וְכִדְמוּתָם בְּצַלְמָם יַעֲשׂוּ אוֹר
בְּלֵב הַיָּם כְּלֶהָבוֹת וְאִשִּׁים.
פְּנֵי מַיִם וְשָׁמַיִם עֲדָיִים
עֲלֵי לַיִל מְטֹהָרִים לְטוּשִׁים.
וְיָם דּוֹמֶה לְרָקִיעַ בְּעֵינוֹ,
שְׁנֵיהֶם אָז שְׁנֵי יַמִּים חֲבוּשִׁים –
וּבֵינוֹתָם לְבָבִי יָם שְׁלִישִׁי,
בְּשׁוּא גַּלֵּי שְׁבָחַי הַחֲדָשִׁים!

snakes, who then pursue the lions –
like vipers that cannot be charmed.

Suddenly, the waves calm down, and are like flocks spread out over the fields. And the night – once the sun has gone down the stairway of the heavenly hosts, who are commanded by the moon[1] – is like a Negress dressed in gold embroidery, or like a violet robe spangled with crystal. The stars are astray in the heart of the sea, like strangers expelled from their homes. And in the heart of the sea they cast a light, in their image and likeness, that glows like fire. Now the sea and the sky are pure, glittering ornaments upon the night. The sea is the colour of the sky – they are two seas bound together. And between these two, my heart is a third sea, as the new waves of my praise surge on high!

זֶה רוּחֲךָ, צַד מַעֲרָב

זֶה רוּחֲךָ, צַד מַעֲרָב, רָקוּחַ:
הַנֵּרְדְּ בִּכְנָפָיו וְהַתַּפּוּחַ.
מֵאוֹצְרוֹת הָרוֹכְלִים מוֹצָאֲךָ,
כִּי אֵינְךָ מֵאוֹצְרוֹת הָרוּחַ!
בְּכַנְפֵי דְרוֹר תָּנִיף, וְתִקְרָא לִי דְרוֹר,
וּכְמָר־דְּרוֹר מִן הַצְּרוֹר לָקוּחַ.

TO THE WESTERN WIND

This wind of yours, O West, is all perfume – it has the scent of spikenard and apple in its wings. Wind, you come from the storehouse of spice-merchants, and not from the common storehouse of winds. You lift up the swallow's wings, you set me free, you are like the purest perfume, fresh from a bunch of

1. Lit. 'commander over unit of fifty'.

מָה נִּכְסְפוּ לָךְ עָם, אֲשֶׁר בִּגְלָלָךְ
רָכְבוּ בְּגַב הַיָּם עֲלֵי גַב לוּחַ!
אַל נָא תְרַפֶּה יָדְךָ מִן הָאֳנִי,
כִּי יַחֲנֶה הַיּוֹם וְכִי יָפוּחַ.
וּרְקַע תְּהוֹם וּקְרַע לְבַב יַמִּים, וְגַע
אֶל הַרְרֵי קֹדֶשׁ וְשָׁם תָּנוּחַ.
וּגְעַר בְּקָדִים הַמְסָעֵר יָם, עֲדֵי
יָשִׂים לְבַב הַיָּם כְּסִיר נָפוּחַ.

myrrh. Everyone here longs for you; by your good graces, they ride over the sea upon a mere plank. Oh, do not abandon the ship, when the day draws to its end or when it begins. Smooth out the ocean, break a path through the sea until you reach the holy mountains, and there subside. Rebuke the east wind that whips up the sea and turns it into a boiling cauldron.

מַה יַּעֲשֶׂה אָסוּר בְּיַד הַצּוּר, אֲשֶׁר
פַּעַם יְהִי עָצוּר, וְעֵת שָׁלוּחַ?
אַךְ סוֹד שְׁאֵלָתִי בְּיַד מָרוֹם — וְהוּא
יוֹצֵר מְרוֹם הָרִים וּבוֹרֵא רוּחַ!

But how can the wind help, for it is a prisoner of the Rock – sometimes held back and sometimes let loose? Only God can grant my deepest wish: for He is the maker of high mountains and the creator of winds!

קִרְאוּ עֲלֵי בָנוֹת

SONG AT SEA

קִרְאוּ עֲלֵי בָנוֹת וּמִשְׁפָּחוֹת
שָׁלוֹם, וְעַל אַחִים וְעַל אָחוֹת,
מֵאֵת אֲסִיר תִּקְוָה אֲשֶׁר נִקְנָה
לַיָּם, וְשָׂם רוּחוֹ בְּיַד רוּחוֹת.
דָּחוּי בְּיַד מַעְרָב לְיַד מִזְרָח,
זֶה יַעֲבֹר לַנְחוֹת, וְזֶה — לִדְחוֹת.
בֵּינוֹ וּבֵין מָוֶת כְּפֶשַׂע, אַךְ
בֵּינוֹ וּבֵינָיו מַעֲבֶה לוּחוֹת.
קָבוּר בְּחַיָּיו בַּאֲרוֹן עֵץ — לֹא
קַרְקַע, וְלֹא אַרְבַּע, וְלֹא פָּחוֹת!
יוֹשֵׁב — וְאֵין לַעֲמֹד עֲלֵי רַגְלָיו,
שׁוֹכֵב — וְאֵין רַגְלָיו מְשֻׁלָּחוֹת,
חוֹלֶה וְיָרֵא מִפְּנֵי גוֹיִם,

Greetings to the kinsfolk, to brothers and sisters, from this prisoner of hope who was ransomed by the sea and committed his spirit into the hands of the winds. Now they push him back and forth: the west wind guides his ship, while the east wind thrusts it back. Between him and death there is nothing but a step; between them only the thickness of the planks. He is buried alive in a wooden coffin, but without any earth: not even four cubits,[1] not even a handful. He sits, for there is no room for him to stand; he lies down, and he cannot stretch out his legs. He is ill, he is afraid of the

1. The minimum required for a grave.

גַּם מִפְּנֵי לִסְטִים וּמְרוּחוֹת.
חוֹבֵל וּמַלָּח, כָּל בְּנֵי פִרְחָח,
הֵם הַסְּגָנִים שָׁם וְהַפַּחוֹת.
לֹא לַחֲכָמִים שֵׁם וְגַם לֹא חֵן
לַיּוֹדְעִים – רַק יוֹדְעִים לִשְׂחוֹת!
יִתְעַצְּבוּ רֶגַע לְזֹאת פָּנַי –
אֵיךְ יַעֲלֹז הַלֵּב וְהַשּׁוּחוֹת –
עַד אֶשְׁפְּכָה נַפְשִׁי בְּחֵיק הָאֵל,
נֹכַח מְקוֹם אָרוֹן וּמִזְבְּחוֹת.
אֶגְמֹל לְאֵל, גּוֹמֵל לְחַיָּבִים
טוֹבוֹת, בְּטוּב שִׁירוֹת וְתִשְׁבָּחוֹת.

Gentile passengers, as well as of pirates and ghosts. The helmsman and the sailors – all of them riffraff – are the viceroys and governors here! Honour does not belong to the wise nor success to the skilful – only to those who know how to swim! Because of this my face is downcast – how could my heart rejoice? – but only for a moment: until I come to pour out my soul in the bosom of God, at the site of the Ark and the Altar. Then I shall render to God, who renders favours to the undeserving,[1] my choicest songs and praises.

הֲבָא מַבּוּל

ON THE HIGH SEAS

הֲבָא מַבּוּל וְשָׂם תֵּבֵל חֲרֵבָה?
וְאֵין לִרְאוֹת פְּנֵי אֶרֶץ חֲרָבָה,
וְאֵין אָדָם וְאֵין חַיָּה וְאֵין עוֹף –
הֲסָף הַכֹּל וְשָׁכְבוּ מַעֲצֵבָה?
וּבִרְאוֹת הַר וְשׁוּחָה לִי מְנוּחָה,
וְאֶרֶץ הָעֲרָבָה לִי עֲרֵבָה.
וְאַשְׁגִּיחַ לְכָל עֵבֶר – וְאֵין כֹּל,
אֲבָל מַיִם וְשָׁמַיִם וְתֵבָה,
וְלִוְיָתָן בְּהַרְתִּיחוֹ מְצוּלָה,
וְאֶחְשֹׁב כִּי תְהוֹם יַחְשֹׁב לְשֵׂיבָה.
וְלֵב הַיָּם יְכַחֵשׁ בָּאֳנִיָּה,
כְּאִלּוּ הִיא בְּיַד הַיָּם גְּנֵבָה!
וְיָם יִזְעַף – וְנַפְשִׁי תַעֲלֹז, כִּי
אֱלֵי מִקְדַּשׁ אֱלֹהֶיהָ קְרֵבָה.

Has a flood come and laid the world waste? For dry land is nowhere to be seen. There is neither man, nor beast, nor bird. Have they all perished, all lain down in torment and died? If only I could see a hill or valley, I would be comforted; even a desert would delight me. I look in every direction, and there is nothing but sea and sky and ship,[2] and leviathan churning the deep, until it seems that the abyss is white with age! Deceitfully, the sea covers the ship, as though it had taken it by theft. The sea is in turmoil, but my soul is full of joy, for she is drawing near to the temple of her God.

1. An allusion to the Benediction on Deliverance, recited by those who come safely through danger.
2. The word here is the one used for Noah's ark.